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November 2016 Japan's №1 English Magazine  
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15

Escape Artist: A weekend on Naoshima Art Island



16

Hands-Free: Stepping into interactive pornography



20

No Friendly Face: The state of our (friendless) nation

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## IN FOCUS

Tokyo Skytree and the Asahi Flame from the docks in Asakusa, by Daniel Pettit



NOV 2016

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# TO-DO LIST

Check full event listings on our Events page online!  
[metropolisjapan.com/events](http://metropolisjapan.com/events)



## NOV 2-7

### TOKYO DESIGN WEEK

A field of glowing, inflatable orb-like tents will take over the lawns of Meiji-Jingu Gaien Mae for Tokyo Design Week. These are the highlight of Tokyo Design Week—AirTents, innovative 4x4m transparent tent designs, each with a different installation inside. You can also see collections of repurposed cargo containers, interactive art installations, and a Super Robot Exhibition. Tokyo Design Week celebrates all kinds of designers and creators, with exhibitions for professionals, debut exhibitors, and school prodigies alike. During the Culture Day holiday and the weekend, J-WAVE radio will co-host a music festival. **Nov 2-7. ¥2,500. Meiji-Jingu Gaien Mae, 2-3 Kasumigaokamachi, Shinjuku-ku. □ Shinanomachi. [tokyodesignweek.jp/2016/tokyo/en\\_index.html](http://tokyodesignweek.jp/2016/tokyo/en_index.html).**

## NOV 3

### IRUMA AIR BASE SHOW

Once a year, Iruma Air Base invites the public into its grounds for something spectacular. A range of aircraft will swoop, loop, and roll in the sky above the crowds on the tarmac below. Planes will fly solo or in formation in the exciting aerobatic demonstrations. Visitors can inspect aircraft from the Central Air Defense Force parked on the ground. The event takes place whatever the weather, but we'll keep our fingers crossed for those beautiful deep blue fall skies. The Iruma Air Base show is held on the national holiday Culture Day, so try to get there early because this event usually attracts big crowds. **Nov 3. Air Base Iruma, 2-3 Inariyama, Sayama-shi, Saitama-ken. □ Inariyama-kōen Station. <http://bit.ly/2e040ge>.**

## NOV 5-6

### RAW TOKYO FLEA MARKET

This market was born from the love of recycled clothing by a couple of Tokyo vintage boutique stores. They knew that many people love clothes for their stories, rather than succumbing to mass-produced brands. Raw Tokyo offers unique vintage clothes, shoes, and accessories in a cool marketplace setting. Browse for cute dresses, unique jackets, original band t-shirts, and rare, quality shoes. Snack at the food trucks and stands selling refreshments and admire the stylish people around you while the DJ spins smooth tracks behind you. It's on during the first Saturday and Sunday of every month at the courtyard of the UN University. **Nov 5-6. United Nations University, 5-53-70, Shibuya. □ Omotesando. [www.facebook.com/events/294083950978265](http://www.facebook.com/events/294083950978265).**



## NOV 19-20 EDITOR'S PICK

### SHIBUYA STREET DANCE WEEK

You've probably spotted a freestyle breakdancer in the streets of Shibuya, or maybe even seen a group practising their choreography in a nearby park. Shibuya is a favored area for street-dancers performing in public spaces, and they all come together for Street Dance Week. It's Japan's largest street-dancing event, where incredibly talented street-dancers will perform for audiences on an open-air stage. The Battle Park session on the Sunday is heaps of fun, with dance battles in hip hop, pop, lock, and freestyle genres taking place in Yoyogi Park. Satisfy your urge to groove along with the free dance lessons. They'll teach you how to Dougie.

**Nov 19-20. Yoyogi Park, 2-1 Yoyogi Kamizono-cho, Shibuya-ku. □ Yoyogi-koen. [www.streetdanceweek.jp](http://www.streetdanceweek.jp).**

## NOV 19-DEC 7

### RIKUGIEN GARDEN ILLUMINATIONS

The colors of fall will become even more vivid with a light installation in Rikugien Gardens designed to illuminate the trees. During the peak of autumn, the garden will stay open until 9pm to show off its coat of deciduous foliage. When dusk falls, the lights turn on to accentuate the autumnal tones. On a still night, they are beautifully reflected in the ponds. See camellias in bloom, and huge maple trees exploding with color. Tea shops and souvenir stalls will also extend their hours. Guided tours about autumn in the gardens are available for free in both Japanese and English. **Nov 19-Dec 7. ¥300. Rikugien Gardens, 6-16-3 Honkomagome, Bunkyo-ku. □ Komagome. teien.tokyo-park.or.jp/en/rikugien/index.html.**

## NOV 25

### NERD NITE

Three nerds walk into a bar and start talking about their passions. It sounds like a bad joke, but actually it's good, intellectual fun. Scientist Tomasz Rutkowski will present "Decoding the Mind in Real Time" with thought-controlled robotics and a hunt for creative brainwaves. Aerospace engineer and PhD student Danielle DeLatte talks about "Emerging Space Industries" including satellite servicing and an asteroid mining community. And movie critic Ken Kaba will reveal "Why We Love Bad Movies." Get brainy while you get boozy at Nerd Nite, the international event series that is now on monthly with different lineups in Tokyo. **Nov 25, 7:30pm. ¥1,500 includes a drink. Good Heavens Bar, 5-32-5 Shimokitazawa, Setagaya-ku. □ Shimokitazawa. [toko.nerdnite.com](http://toko.nerdnite.com).**



## NOV 11

### TORI-NO-ICHI IN ASAKUSA

Based on the Chinese zodiac, this day celebrates the day of the *tori* (rooster). The Tori-no-ichi festival has been a tradition since the Edo period, where open-air markets pop-up at Ootori shrines around Japan. Part of the tradition is purchasing a *kumade*, an ornamental bamboo rake decorated in gold, silver, masks, and old koban coins. Kumade will help rake in success, good fortune, and happiness (if you'll pardon the pun). You should clap your hands in sync with the seller of the rake after buying it. Tori-no-ichi celebrations will be happening at around 30 Ootori shrines in Tokyo, but the one in Asakusa is the most popular. Festivities continue until midnight. **Nov 11.** Ootori Jinja Shrine, 3-18-7 Senzoku, Taito-ku. ☎ Iriya. [www.torinoichi.jp/english/index.htm](http://www.torinoichi.jp/english/index.htm).

## NOV 11-12

### CHEESE FESTA

Smile and say "Cheese-u!" because Cheese Festa is back. This two-day event falls on National Cheese Day (November 11) to celebrate all things cheesy. Sample different kinds from around the world to refine a sophisticated cheese palate, or just to satisfy your thrill for free things. You can learn about matching cheeses to wines and beers, as well as how to cook with and make your own cheese. Everyone's preferences will be catered to, no matter if you're into creamy or sharp, aged or fresh, goat or sheep, hard or soft, smokey or moldy. This is the 25th year of Cheese Festa. **Nov 11-12.** EBIS303, 1-20-8 Ebisu, Shibuya-ku. ☎ Ebisu. [www.cheesefesta.com](http://www.cheesefesta.com).

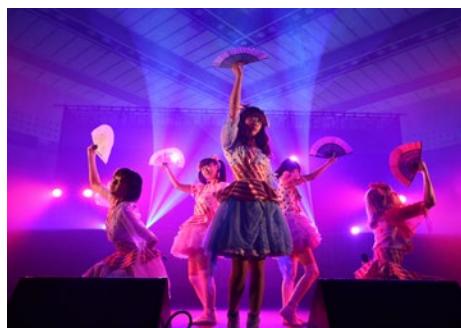
## NOV 12-13

### SNOWBANK PAY IT FORWARD RAIL JAM

Snowboarding in Yoyogi Park? We're not kidding! It's all to raise awareness about bone marrow transplants, initiated by professional boarder Yoshimasa "Daze" Arai. He overcame a near-fatal disease thanks to a successful bone marrow transplant, and now wishes to encourage donation through this snowboarding contest. A slope of snow will be brought into the park with a rail running down the middle. Snowboarders will show off their best tricks, and you're invited to watch. Saturday will be for qualifying rounds, and Sunday is main draw for men's, women's, and junior divisions. There will be food and performances from musicians.

**Nov 12-13.** Yoyogi Park, 2-3 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku.

☞ Yoyogi-koen. [www.sbpif.net](http://www.sbpif.net).



## NOV 26

### MODERN STYLE BONSAI CLASS

Your empty mantelpiece or windowsill need be lonely no longer. Plant your own pine tree Bonsai and learn how to care for it at home in a cozy workshop setting. You'll be provided with all the expertise and equipment you need by bonsai master Chie Rinha. She'll teach you a simple way to keep bonsai year-round, and you'll find that it's not as difficult as you thought. These bonsai have a modern style to match with contemporary interiors at home. Be sure to reserve a spot online, because the workshop is nice and intimate. Keep an eye out for other kinds of workshops hosted by Kontakt East Studio. **Nov 26, 11am.** ¥7,500. Kontakt East Studio, 2-25-11 Nishiazabu, Minato-ku. ☎ Roppongi. [kontacto.jp/161126-bonai](http://kontacto.jp/161126-bonai).

## NOV 26-27

### MOSHI MOSHI NIPPON FESTIVAL

Never fear the culture shock, the Moshi Moshi Nippon Festival is your chance to experience everything from the latest in Japanese pop culture to traditional Japanese arts. Last year was only the second run of the festival, and it attracted 25,000 people. World-famous musicians will perform and an army of kawaii models will flaunt the latest from popular designers. Browse anime, play with technology, and take part in traditional activities like origami folding and kimono dress-ups. The food area offers all kinds of Japanese delicacies. It's free for foreigners who pre-register online and bring a passport to show on the day. **Nov 26-27.** Tokyo Taiikukan, 1-17-1 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku. ☎ Sendagaya. [fes16.moshimoshi-nippon.jp/en](http://fes16.moshimoshi-nippon.jp/en)

## NOV 26-27

### DESIGN FESTA

When it comes to art festivals in Asia, there are none as big as Design Festa. These two days showcase the works of over 12,000 artists, designers, musicians, actors, and more. Anyone, regardless of age, nationality, talent, and master-level can exhibit whatever their artistic expression may be. There will be film screenings and musical performances of different genres on both indoor and outdoor stages. A highlight of the event is the live painting, where brush-or-pen-wielding artists are confronted with a large blank canvas and a ladder. Not to mention the added pressure of a curious and expectant crowd.

**Nov 26-27.** Tokyo Big Sight West Halls, 3-11-

1 Ariake, Koto. ☎ Kokusai-tenjijo-seimon. [designfesta.com/en](http://designfesta.com/en).

# JAPANESE APHRODISIACS

# FOOD FA

The exotic and erotic foods of Japan

BY JESSICA

**A**ncient Egyptians consumed wine-soaked lilies to boost sexual performance. Aztec leaders drank melted hot chocolate. The Assyrians bathed in saffron infusions. Oysters, chilli, avocado, asparagus, figs, vanilla, nutmeg, basil, duck eggs containing a fetus—the spectrum of aphrodisiacs throughout history is broad. But so are the needs of lust-enhancement.

Key passion-inducing attributes of an aphrodisiac appear to be: an aesthetic resemblance to sexual or reproductive organs, nutritional components with relevant physiological side effects, and a perceived sensual thrill of exoticism. In Japan such foods, drinks, or other are known as *biyaku*, with the kanji roughly translating to “flirt medicine.”

## FUGU

A meal of improperly prepared *fugu* would be your last, as this Japanese pufferfish contains enough of the deadly poison tetrodotoxin to kill 30 adults. *Shibireru* is the Japanese word meaning “to become numb,” and this is the sensation eating fugu induces, a titillating reminder of the inherent dangers. Not only is fugu deadly, it’s also expensive, and it’s this racey combination of luxury, Russian roulette, and survivors’ post-consumption renewed zest for life that has prompted the fugu’s long history of being regarded as an aphrodisiac.



## UNI

This spiny hermaphrodite is notoriously difficult to harvest and labor-intensive to clean, giving the small portions of delicate meat retrieved an exotic appeal. The creature’s perceived exoticism; the meat’s tongue-like appearance; sensual custardy consistency; buttery, sweet and slightly briny flavor; high price point; and unavoidable reality that you’re eating a creature’s gonads make it hardly surprising that *uni* (sea urchin) has been regarded as aphrodisiac in Japan for thousands of years. Interestingly, uni also contains high levels of the euphoria-causing anandamide, a cannabinoid similar to THC in marijuana.

“stamina food,” and a popular meal eaten during summer to beat fatigue. These strength and vitality-providing qualities and an evocative phallic appearance have provided eel with legendary *biyaku* status in Japan for over 1000 years. Japanese wives have been known to prepare unagi for their husbands to inspire passion.

## EEL

Rich in protein, calcium, and vitamins A and E, *unagi* (eel) is regarded in Japan as a powerful

in men. Yamaimo has energy-providing properties due to bulk levels of protein, fiber, B vitamins, and minerals, and has even been referred to as the “eel of the mountains.”

## SHIITAKE

*Shiitake* have long been heralded in Japan for their nutritional and medicinal qualities, used for everything from cancer treatment to strengthening immune systems—and improving libido. Historical documents record that shiitake mushrooms were used by the ancient Japanese court as an aphrodisiac. Aside from their suggestive shape, characteristic soft, fleshy texture, and juicy center, it is the lentinan in shiitake, thought to boost

# INTASIES: PHRODISIACS

to titillate your taste buds, and more

THOMPSON



erectile production, or the zinc, which increases testosterone, that may be responsible for this reputation. The *donko* shiitake, which are cultivated to produce striking white designs on the top and have an even richer flavor and aroma (with a significantly more expensive price tag), are considered an even more potent aphrodisiac.

## GINGKO NUTS

Native to Japan and China, the *gingko biloba*

tree is one of the oldest surviving plants in the world. Not only is it resilient, it's also thought that the leaves and nuts of the tree are extremely beneficial for improving the body's circulatory system, increasing blood flow to all the "major organs" of the body. It's also said to aid in stress and tension reduction, lowering inhibitions, and improving mood—all important factors for the libido—and has resulted in gingko nuts and extract being used as a pleasure facilitator for hundreds of years.

## CARROTS, GOBO, RENKON

Throughout many cultures, various root vegetables have been considered aphrodisiacs. A Japanese proverb says, "A man who likes carrots, likes women." Aside from their hard tubular form, carrots are full of vitamin A, a nutrient thought to be essential in the production of sex hormones, in sperm production, and in improving lubrication. *Gobo* (burdock root) is recorded as the favorite food of preeminent samurai Hideyoshi Toyotomi, who was rumored to have kept up to 300 concubines. *Gobo* is rich in energy-producing nutrients, as well as the amino acid arginine, a compound that stimulates blood flow to the organs and is believed to increase sperm count. Studies have shown that women who took a supplement containing arginine experienced increased desire, more frequent orgasms, enhanced stimulation, and increased lubrication. Thanks to this amorous reputation, bunches of *gobo* have been given as many a honeymoon gag. *Renkon*, or lotus root, is also high in arginine and is said to have been fed to clients by the *yuko*, professional women of pleasure in feudal Japan.

With that in mind, here are some dishes you can try, to put you in the mood for love: *Fugu Sashimi*, *Tecchiri* (*Fugu Nabe*), *Uni Gunkan Maki*, *Uni Pasta*, *Unagi no Kabayaki* (or *anago*, saltwater eel, as *unagi* is endangered), *Yamakake Soba*, *Tempura Shiitake*, *Gingko Nut Yakitori*, *Kinpira Gobo*, *Renkon Chips*.



RECIPE

## UNI PASTA

BY JESSICA THOMPSON

### INGREDIENTS

- 100g capellini pasta
- 125ml thin cream
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 20ml sake
- 2 small garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 100g sea urchin, plus extra to serve
- Aonori, to serve
- Salt

SERVING  
2

### PREPARATION

1. Cook pasta until *al dente*, strain and reserve water.
2. Combine cream, butter, sake, and crushed garlic cloves in a small saucepan. Place over

a low heat and cook for 10 minutes, until slightly thickened, and stirring occasionally to avoid mixture sticking to the bottom or sides of the pan. Lift briefly from the heat if the mixture starts to bubble too rapidly.

3. Remove the cream mixture and add to a food processor with *uni*. Blend until smooth, then strain. Taste the sauce and add a little salt if required. Return the *uni* cream mixture to the pan over a low heat. Add pasta, increase heat to medium and toss well to coat pasta. Add a couple of tablespoons of the reserved pasta water if you want a runnier sauce.
4. Divide pasta between plates, sprinkle with aonori and top with extra *uni*.

# TAKE ME TO HABANA

**Mexi-Cuban fusion in the backstreets of Shibuya**

BY JOHANNA MAYER

The news dropped nearly two years after I moved to Japan from New York City: Cafe Habana, an NYC staple with lines snaking around the block and Mexican-Cuban fusion to write home about, had joined the ranks of New York eateries that have hopped over the puddle and set up shop in Tokyo.

Harumph. The pride of being a long-time New Yorker revved up. Why try to overextend a good thing? It wouldn't be the same in Tokyo—and it definitely wouldn't be as good.

Cafe Habana's famed grilled Cuban sandwich, with citrus-marinated roast pork, sweet ham, swiss cheese, and a thinly sliced pickle, was voted one of the best sandwiches in NYC. I once waited in line for two hours to get my hands on one. And when you've waited that long to eat at a place, you almost hope that it won't be as good anywhere else.

Armed with a skeptical attitude and a long-nursed hankering for a Cuban sandwich—any Cuban sandwich—I wound through the backstreets of Shibuya and arrived at Cafe Habana Tokyo for a late lunch on a Sunday.

There was no line outside the brightly painted building. I walked right inside to see strings of hanging lights and a painting of Che Guevara on a mustard colored wall. It felt like an outdoor BBQ in a neighborhood park. And against my



every instinct, I liked the fun vibe.

But of course, the real test is the food. I wanted to maintain my pride. I wanted to feel smug. I did not want to like it.

But I did. I really, really did.

I regret to report that the Cuban sandwich (¥800 for a half) is just as satisfying as its NYC counterpart. The pork is tender and citrusy, the pickle crunchy, the grill marks are still fresh on the thick and crusty bread. This sandwich sounds simple, but the satisfying salty-sweet fusion rocks you out of Japan and into the Caribbean.

The grilled steak torta sandwich (¥900 for a half) packs a lighter, simpler flavor. Grilled red peppers taste fresh against the hearty steak, and a light layer of chipotle mayo keeps it all together. These sandwiches are big—try half a Cuban and half a torta to keep your taste buds on edge.

Between bites of sandwich, nibble on a side of salty tostones (¥600), deep-fried plantains that hit the crispy-on-the-outside-soft-on-the-inside jackpot. Dip them in the tomato-based chipotle side sauce and throw in a couple drops of Marie Sharpe's hot sauce (included on the side) for an extra kick.

If you're feeling adventurous, you can chase it

down with a Chocobanana Cuba Libre or Marshmallow Fizz (both ¥1,000), but I suggest going for a good old beer. With this food, you're going to want to guzzle, not sip. The Day of the Dead Porter (¥800) is a nice step up from the draft, and the smoky flavor is still light enough to wash down your grub.

And don't fill up before also getting a taste of the Mexican grilled corn (¥600). Salty Cotija cheese coats the piping hot cob, and a sprinkling of chili powder leaves a satisfying bite. Squeeze on some lime for a little zing.

Skip the dessert menu and order the sweet plantains (¥500) to top off your meal. This order runs on the small side, but a few tastes of the nearly-caramelized fruit will be the cherry on top.

After my meal, I gathered up the pieces of my pride and reluctantly admitted that Cafe Habana Tokyo soared past my expectations. Only one question remained: at such a great place, why wasn't there a line? If Tokyoites knew what was good for them, they'd be lining up around the block to eat at this joint.

Near 5 o'clock, I finally stepped outside. Clusters of people milled around the entrance, eagerly waiting for their names to be called.



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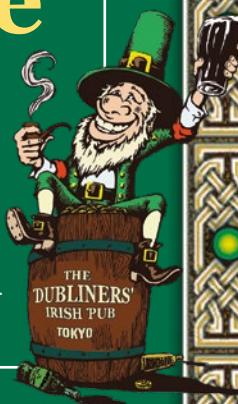
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## CINEMATIC UNDERGROUND CONTINENTAL DRIFT

French films from light to ponderous

BY KEVIN MCGUE

Evolution © 2015 Les Films du Monde

spheric, meditative horror film *Evolution* is set on an idyllic island populated only by women and children, until one day something comes out of the sea. On from November 26 at Cinema Qualite (3-37-12 Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku; <http://qualite.musashino-k.jp>).

And proving that France can crank out comedies just as silly as Hollywood fare is the recent mega-hit *All Gone South* (a.k.a. *Babysitting 2*). Presented largely in "found footage," it chronicles the disastrous vacation of a dim-witted guy and his bros escaping Paris for the jungles of Brazil. On from November 19 at Cinemart (3-8-15 Roppongi, Minato-ku; <http://www.cinemart.co.jp/theater/shinjuku/>) and Human Trust Cinema Shibuya (Cocoti Bldg.7,8F 1-23-16, Shibuya-ku; [www.ht-cinema.com](http://www.ht-cinema.com)).

Tokyo art houses have a selection of French films this autumn that illustrate the range of the nation's cinema—from seminal masterpieces to raunchy comedies. One of the less-studied figures in the New Wave movement, Jacques Rozier, is the subject of a retrospective running through November 18 at Image Forum in Shibuya (2-10-2 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku; [www.imageforum.co.jp](http://www.imageforum.co.jp)). One highlight is the rarely-screened but influential *Adieu Philippine* (1962), a coming-of-age tale about a young soldier about

to be shipped off to Algeria and the two girls he spends the summer with on the island of Corsica.

There will be cinema to savor with the vineyard-set family drama *First Growth* (Premiers crus), on from November 19 at Bunkamura's Le Cinema (2-24-1 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku; [www.bunkamura.co.jp](http://www.bunkamura.co.jp)). It focuses on Charlie, the publisher of a successful wine guide who has no practical experience—that is, not until his father's vineyard in Burgundy faces bankruptcy.

Lucile Hadzihalilovic's beautifully-shot atmo-



*Adieu Philippine* © 1962 Rome Paris Films.

## EIGA MY DAD AND MR. ITO

BY ROB SCHWARTZ

Yuki Tanada is a breath of fresh air in the staid world of Japanese film directors. While she can no longer be called a "young" artist (she's 41), her style exhibits a fresh energy and novel approach that is lacking in other Japanese auteurs. In addition, she's one of few women filmmakers in Japan and as such is much more sensitive to the plight of her female characters. Tanada won the prestigious student PIA prize in 2001 and went on to win the Directors Guild of Japan New Directors Award in 2008 for *Million Yen Girl*. Her films are often humorous, with a realistic edge. In this they are precisely what most of her contemporaries—who go for either straight melodrama or over-the-top comedy—can't do. Tanada's current piece sets the scene with



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twentysomething Aya (Juri Ueno) living with her much older ne'er-do-well lover Ito (Lily Franky). Suddenly Aya's father (Tatsuya Fuji) comes to live in their small apartment, and he has a litany of complaints about them, starting with the fact that neither of them have anything approaching

an upwardly-mobile job. Both funny and searing, the film addresses issues of family and the plight of Japan's aging, unwanted generation. Like many great films it elicits laughter, grimaces, and tears. A gem. (Japanese title: *Otosan to Ito-san*; 119 min.)

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## FEATURED MOVIE

## BRIDGET JONES'S BABY

**I**t's been 15 years since the events in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. In this smartly evolved second sequel, our endearingly imperfect, now middle-aged heroine (welcome back, Renée Zellweger), now accepting and even embracing her apparent eternal singleness, celebrates her 43rd birthday by having a one-night stand with a charming Yank in a yurt at a music festival.

In the same week, though, she is unexpectedly reunited, in the most pleasurable way, with her old flame, the married-but-separated Mr. Darcy (Colin Firth, good as ever). She sensibly takes precau-

tions, but somewhat less sensibly uses biodegradable condoms well past their enjoy-by date.

So when the inevitable title oven-bun emerges, she can't really say who the father is. Yes, it's a far from original setup, but it's handled here with such warmth and wit that it's hard not to just go with it.

One reason for this, in addition to Zellweger's spot-on performance, is the return of Sharon Maguire, who directed the 2001 film that kicked off the franchise (but wisely opted out of the 2004 box office bomb *Bridget Jones: The*

*Edge of Reason*). Another is Emma Thompson, who also polished the script and apparently gave herself all the funniest lines as a wry and dry obstetrician.

Hugh Grant's character's been killed off (quite humorously) and replaced by Patrick Dempsey. Not my favorite actor, but he fits the role here nicely.

Bottom line: an effervescent, good-natured, familiar-but-fresh, just-raunchy-enough sex comedy that delightfully exceeds expectations. (123 min)



### THE LAST WITCH HUNTER

Vin Diesel plays the 800-year-old title warrior, currently operating in NYC. You'd think the merely

mindless *Fast & Furious* franchise would keep the man busy enough to prevent him from having to act (for want of a better word) in bombs like this. It's a heavy-handed and humorless tsunami of fussy and underwhelming CGI that spends a lot of time between witch-slaughtering on expository dialogue detailing a borderline-incomprehensible, logic-deficient mythos that nobody really cares about. The film's like watching someone else play a not-very-interesting video game. And Michael Caine, shame on you. (106 min)



### JASON BOURNE

The fourth Bourne movie (or fifth if you count the turkey with Jeremy Renner) has all the ingredients: Matt Damon, propulsive action, palpable tension, well-choreographed and executed chase and fight scenes, Paul Greengrass in the director's chair, and Alicia Vikander to boot. But at heart this is a self-conscious replica movie that offers very little new. Missing is the emotional grounding that made the previous films so engrossing on more than a mere action level. And it can't shake a certain greatest-hits aspect or the suspicion that it exists largely because we like watching Damon be Bourne. Enough. (123 min)



### THE GIFT

The affluent lives of Jason Bateman & Rebecca Hall (perfectly cast) hit a snag when they bump into a seedy former

high-school classmate, a creep who wants to be friends and "let bygones be bygones." What does he mean by that? He starts by leaving little gifts on their doorstep. Now, you're thinking a formulaic home-invasion terror flick, right? With maybe a bloody fight in the kitchen at the end. Well, no. Joel Edgerton's assured directorial debut (he also wrote the script and plays the creep), confounds genre expectations at every turn. I'll tell you no more, but go see this clever, original thriller. (108 min)



### CONCUSSION

True story: Forensic neuropathologist Dr. Bennett Omalu, a Nigerian immigrant to the USA, discovered a

type of brain trauma caused by the constant head-smashing associated with pro football. But instead of the gratitude he expected, the NFL, which had known about this and sat on it for decades, sends in the offense. As films about whistle-blowers go, this one lacks the satisfying punch of say, *Erin Brockovich* or *The Insider*. But the reason to see it is the precise, understated performance by Will Smith as Omalu, his best in years, backed up by Albert Brooks, Alec Baldwin and Gugu Mbatha-Raw. (123 min)



### PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Jane Austen's Bennet sisters are now a posse of empowered, kick-ass zombie-slaying she-warriors who nonetheless remain flutteringly focused on finding suitable husbands. It's a one-joke genre-mashup whose novelty works for about half an hour. Only intermittently funny, not scary, very loud and totally surprise-free. (Plus: Lily James, from *Cinderella*, as the headstrong Elizabeth.) I liked it more than I thought I would, but I didn't expect to like it at all. Should have been a lot more fun. Frustrating because it's well acted and made by clearly smart people who could've aimed a bit higher. (108 min)



### SULLY

Captain Chesley Sullenberger's (Tom Hanks) unprecedented decision to put his crippled airliner down on the Hudson River, saving the lives of 155 people, gave the world a hero. Clint Eastwood's worthy crowd-pleaser about the incident is an ode to professionalism and a rumination on heroism in today's world. My only gripe is that, while the flight's six minutes are as gripping as any ever filmed, it's simply not enough to hang a movie on, and in an attempt to create tension Eastwood plays up what amounts to a footnote: the evil NTSB's initial assertion that the plane could've indeed reached an airport. (96 min)

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# FULL STREAM AHEAD

## Music streaming services in Japan

BY PATRICK ST. MICHEL

**A**fter several false starts, the streaming era of music has truly started in Japan. The arrival of Spotify to the archipelago this past September (in beta mode at time of print, not open to everyone quite yet) cemented that the country's music industry, long skittish when it comes to new platforms for music distribution, was at least willing to give it a shot. Don't expect to see Tower Records vanish anytime soon, but listeners in Japan now have more digital options in front of them.

This sudden influx of streaming services means potential users have a lot of choices. There are currently six major players in the burgeoning market—Apple Music, Spotify, AWA, Rakuten Music, Google Play Music, and Line Music. Unless you want to splurge on all of them, you need to find the platform perfect for you. We're here to help, highlighting the pros and cons of each.

### APPLE MUSIC

**Facts:** The folks who possibly made your smartphone and computer also have a streaming service.

**Basics:** ¥980 a month, though you can get a three-month trial for free. You can also buy cards for a year-long subscription for about ¥9800.

**Pros:** Alongside a plethora of playlists, Apple offers Beats 1 radio, featuring a nice variety of shows hosted by well-known artists. Apple

Music also tends to get the biggest "exclusive" album debuts.

**Cons:** Slowly improving, but the actual layout of the platform can be confusing.

**Japanese Music?**: A lot! And they do a good job highlighting emerging talent, with a weekly "New Artist" feature.

**Verdict:** Great for J-pop fans and those seeking out new Japanese acts. For others...give the free trial a go.

### SPOTIFY

**Facts:** From Sweden, it's the world's largest streaming service with over 40 million subscribers.

**Basics:** At time of printing, still in beta mode and only available to select users. Will be available in a free form and a premium version for ¥980 a month.

**Pros:** Playlists. All the playlists you could ever need, from songs to help you fall asleep to a set called "Power Gaming," for all serious Playstation fiends. More importantly, you can make and share your own playlists.

**Cons:** The ads that interrupt you every few songs, though that's remedied by shelling out for a subscription. So instead, let's say the fact people can see what you've listened to recently (that Mariah Carey binge was private, thanks).

**Japanese Music?**: It's there, but at the moment not really promoted. Fingers crossed for Japan-centric charts and playlists that don't call Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra "fresh talent."

**Verdict:** Could change in coming months, but best for those who love customization and can live without a surplus of J-pop.

### LINE MUSIC

**Facts:** The popular messaging service got into the market in 2015, before Apple or Spotify.

**Basics:** ¥1000 a month for unlimited streaming, though can opt for the ¥500 a month deal that's capped at 20 hours of music if you'd like.

**Pros:** Its integration with the Line message app—it's especially easy to share what you are

listening to with friends.

**Cons:** Designed primarily for mobile use, which means potential connectivity hiccups.

**Japanese Music?**: A lot of big names, alongside local curators such as electronic station Block.Fm creating playlists.

**Verdict:** If you listen to music primarily on the go, this is probably your best option.

### RAKUTEN MUSIC

**Facts:** The popular online retail site launched their own streaming service this summer.

**Basics:** ¥980 a month if you use a Rakuten ID Payment...but if you try Apple ID, add an additional ¥100 on to that. They also have a 20-hour-capped Light Plan for ¥500 (or ¥600 for Apple folks).

**Pros:** If you have a Rakuten account and you use it a lot, you can get a lot of points from joining with this service, alongside other benefits.

**Cons:** If you don't use Rakuten, not much about this service stands out.

**Japanese Music?**: Good amount of big-name J-pop available.

**Verdict:** Heavy Rakuten users who like J-pop should jump on, everybody else would probably be better off elsewhere.

### AWA

**Facts:** Biggie-sized company Avex's foray into the streaming wilderness.

**Basics:** ¥960 for a standard package, though you can opt for a limited "Lite" plan for ¥360 or even go with a free option...though don't expect to listen to much with that one.

**Pros:** So far, this has been the only Japanese platform to feature an exclusive album—Ayumi Hamasaki's M(a)de In Japan—though it ended up on other services (and in stores) soon after. Still, fans of Avex artists might want to keep an eye on what AWA does.

**Cons:** Nothing specific—it just doesn't offer anything that different from the rest of the pack.

**Verdict:** For those hoping to get more J-pop releases ahead of everyone else, AWA might possibly keep doing that.

### GOOGLE PLAY MUSIC

**Facts:** Every major tech player has to be in this business, so here's Google.

**Basics:** ¥980 a month, but that also includes access to YouTube Red thrown in.

**Pros:** Besides the YouTube perk, Google Play Music allows you to upload up to 50,000 songs to their cloud, if you need to fill any holes from your library.

**Cons:** Ultimately very similar to Spotify, albeit with less social functions.

**Japanese Music?**: It's there, and leans heavy on the big name J-Pop.

**Verdict:** Those looking to store their existing music—or who need an excuse to get YouTube Red—should look into it.



# IT WASN'T A DREAM

**Weekend getaway to “Art Island” Naoshima**

BY JOHANNA MAYER



**D**on't think you can simply plunge into the surreal world of remote “art island” Naoshima. You have to ease in during a ferry ride across the placid Seto Inland Sea in Kagawa. Forget Tokyo, forget work. A giant red pumpkin covered in black polka dots will greet you at Miyanoura Port on Naoshima.

It sounds like a dream, and it almost was. Thirty years ago, Naoshima was a dying fishing community with a withering population. An agreement between then-mayor of Naoshima and Benesse Holdings, a publishing and education conglomerate that also happens to lay claim to a powerhouse art collection, transformed the island into an unlikely international art hub. Several architecturally stunning museums (all designed by architecture titan Tadao Ando) host works by an impressive lineup of renowned Japanese and international artists, and a museum-worthy array of outdoor installations are sprinkled across the island.

Naoshima has become something of a mecca for art lovers, and it attracts all sorts of pilgrims. You don't have to be an art devotee or high roller. You can shell out for the world-class museums, or spend a day exploring outdoor installations without cracking your wallet. You can stay in a Benesse-owned museum-hotel with original artworks in every room and wander through the museum after hours, or you can crash at a hostel. Either way you choose to experience Naoshima, you will swirl away into the universe of the art island, starting with the moment you step off the ferry and see that giant pumpkin. And it will feel more than a bit like a dream.

Ease in by wandering through the Art House

Project, which spans seven buildings scattered throughout the Honmura district. Artists have transformed empty houses into immersive works of art that you can stumble into while winding through quiet streets. If you can't hit all seven, bump Minamidera to the top of your list. Inside an Ando building, James Turrell's “Backside of the Moon” plays with sense and perception of light. Don't rush; the process of weaving through the village and seeing how the island has transformed is part of the project.

Next, make your way to the museum-hotel hybrid Benesse House Museum (¥1,030) for an intimate and secluded glimpse of Warhol, Basquiat, and Twombly. Lie down on the smooth white rocks in Kan Yasuda's semi-outdoor piece “The Secret of the Sky.” Stay for a while and watch the sky change, framed by the building. The neighboring Lee Ufan Museum (¥1,030) is the sleeper pick. It's a small, quiet museum, but stand in front of the artworks for several minutes and they become shockingly dynamic. Force yourself to stay still in the Meditation Room for at least five minutes. Likely, you'll stay longer.

If you can't splurge on a museum room at Benesse House, make your way back to Miyanoura Port and stay at a hostel or guesthouse. Shuttle buses hit the major sights, but go by foot or rental bike if you're up for it—it's better for bumping into the outdoor installations. Some are obvious, such as Yayoi Kusama's iconic yellow pumpkin at the lonely end of a pier (the red pumpkin is hers, too). But others integrate so fluidly into the surroundings that they're easy to miss. Keep a sharp eye and look up, down, and around. (Plus, the immaculate views of the Seto Inland Sea

don't cost a thing). Back in Miyanoura, cap your night by soaking in art onsen Naoshima Bath “I ❤️湯” (¥510) and let yourself float away into the dreamlike world that the funky architecture and decorations inspires.

The next morning, head straight to Chichu Art Museum (¥2,060). If you must choose only one museum, make it Chichu. The museum is a stunning fusion of art, nature, and architecture (designed by—you guessed it—Tadao Ando). Built mostly underground in order to preserve the landscape, the museum is lit primarily by natural light. Only three grand-scale pieces live inside Chichu, but they are powerful forces created by art giants Walter De Maria, James Turrell, and Claude Monet. Admire the stillness in the echoing chamber of the larger-than-life De Maria work. Feel your way through Turrell's transportive “Open Sky,” and emerge stunned. Save the Monet room for the grand finale. Step inside, spin around, and absorb the natural sun that spills through the roof and alters the masterpieces every minute. You'll stumble out of the subterranean museum dizzied, blinking, and buzzing.

On the ferry back to the real world, watch the red and black pumpkin fade away as your mind switches gears. Remember Tokyo, remember work. But promise yourself that you'll be back to Naoshima. Otherwise, you might think it was all a dream.

**Naoshima is located in Kagawa Prefecture. From Tokyo, take a Shinkansen to Okayama (3.5hrs) or fly to Okayama or Takamatsu (1hr 20min). A ferry from Uno Port in Okayama or Port of Takamatsu in Kagawa will take you to the island. (Check for schedule changes).**

# VR-RATED

A group of rebel programmers imagines the future of adult virtual reality games

BY SEAN MAY



One Saturday in October, members of the Adult VR No Kai group gathered on the fourth floor of an unassuming building in Akihabara. They booted up software on computers while a line formed outside the event space. The people in line were ordinary for this part of town—bespectacled, male, and either stick thin or rotund. On another day, they may have lined up outside *Plum Live Shop!* on the seventh floor of the same building to buy moe figurines, or on the third floor at *Torano Ana* to peruse the newest hentai comics. But that day, they were there to see anime characters come to life.

Adult VR No Kai—which translates to “the meeting for adult VR”—is a collective of programmers, sound engineers, manga artists, and illustrators who develop adult games for virtual reality. That Saturday, members had come together to host an event showcasing their latest software. They have hosted such events before, often out of their own pockets, and they will continue to do so, they say, out of a conviction that people need to experience VR firsthand to truly appreciate it. And since they’re not welcome at mainstream VR conventions, they have taken it upon themselves to seek out an audience.

Virtual reality technology has been around for decades, but it has only become affordable for consumers in recent years. The release of VR hardware such as the Oculus Rift, HTC Vive, and PlayStation VR have provided consumers with an inexpensive entry point into virtual reality. And of all the different industries exploring VR, from music to film to pornography, the gaming industry is its public face. This year's Tokyo Game Show was heavy on VR software, and it is a sign that VR will revolutionize the future of gaming.

Adult games, however, are being left behind. Adult content is often banned outright at mainstream gaming conventions in Japan, and creators of such content lack avenues to bring their games to a wider audience. But if the actions of some of the gamers at this year's Tokyo Game Show are anything to go by—a booth was shut down due to people groping a mannequin that became an anime character when seen through VR headsets—there is an audience that is at least curious about seeking out such content.

Adult VR No Kai is interested in exploring that curiosity. Earlier this year, the group organized the first adult VR festival in Japan. They held the inaugural festival in June, though the event was quickly called off due to overcrowding. The street outside the venue in Akihabara was overwhelmed with people wanting to catch a glimpse of VR porn for themselves, and the world took note; international media covered the story, ascribing the situation to Japan's inherent quirkiness.

The collective successfully ran the festival later in August, and have since traveled around the country hosting similar events, most recently in Sapporo. And at these events, as was the case with that one Saturday in October, people's attention invariably turns to one game in particular: *Let's Play with Nanai!*

Roba and Kaicho (members of Adult VR No Kai who prefer their online handles to their birth names) developed the title. The reason why the game attracts interest is because there aren't many games quite like it—about that Kaicho is sure. What makes this game unique was an idea Kaicho had when he first experienced VR porn himself, just over a year ago. "When I first watched porn in VR," Kaicho said, "I wondered how people got themselves off, having to hold controllers in their hands."

The game is simple. It's played by wearing a VR headset, which transports the player to a bedroom. Once there, the player is greeted by Nanai, a slender, pink-haired anime character. But instead of using controllers like most VR games, *Let's Play with Nanai!* blends physical

reality with virtual reality by using surrogate bodies. A smartphone is attached to a surrogate body that controls Nanai's movements, allowing the player to have seamless interactions with Nanai in VR. Information is relayed between the smartphone and the computer, and the position of the surrogate correlates with Nanai's. Kaicho says that anything can be used as a surrogate, from sex dolls to actual human beings. "A fan of our game used his wife as a surrogate to have sex with Nanai," said Kaicho. "He was happy, but his wife apparently wasn't too thrilled."

Out of all the software developed by the members of Adult VR No Kai, *Let's Play with Nanai!* is possibly the most advanced. The mem-

bers are primarily hobbyists and come to VR from different backgrounds—Kaicho is a respected Happy Hardcore DJ, while Roba dabbles as a VJ when he is not programming. This is perhaps why there is an undeniable DIY aesthetic to the software they develop, some of them more novel than others.

Besides the fact that he uses his birth name, Haruyoshi Waseda is different from the others in that he designs adult games using

augmented reality. The game he developed uses cameras on smartphone to superimpose women in the frame of the shot, using the same technology as *Pokémon Go*. When the camera is pointed at a sex doll, the phone screen displays a picture of a woman instead of what's really there. It's a basic, playful software and Waseda is proud of it. It was time-consuming work, in which he had to manually log the color hues of human flesh, a similar process to chroma keying for green screens. "That way," he said, "when you grab the breasts of the doll, your hand will be overlaid on top of the image on your screen, so it will look like you're grabbing the breast of the woman." This is why Waseda had dyed his sex dolls green, like the Hulk. "They have that over in the US you know, Hulk-themed sex toys," he said. "Must be the Halloween culture over there. It's not for me, I don't get it."

Kinks and fetishes come in all shapes and sizes, there's no doubt about that. A person deciding to please themselves with an aid

resembling The Incredible Hulk is, as far as I'm concerned, none of my business, so long as nobody is harmed or anything illegal is performed. However, as I lay in Nanai's bed, her soft gaze catching mine, I couldn't help feeling uncomfortable. Perhaps it was a feeling of uneasiness that came with the knowledge that out there, in the real world, on the fourth floor of an unassuming building in Akihabara, I was surrounded by Robo and Kaicho and the other members of Adult VR No Kai. Nanai moaned in my ear. As I lay in Nanai's bed, staring up at the ceiling of her bedroom, I sensed eager eyes glued on us as





other participants waited for their turn to get into Nanai's room.

But more than anything else, what made me feel uncomfortable was the fact that I couldn't shake the feeling that I was taking advantage of Nanai, who, dressed in a school uniform, clearly appears young. The last thing she told me before I disconnected and returned to reality was something she whispered while we shifted positions in bed. She looked back, her eyes averted, and muttered: *Ushirokara dato chotto kowai*—it's a little scary from behind.

It's perhaps easy to chalk this sort of thing up as a weird product of quirky Japanese culture. While the makers of the game explicitly cite that Nanai is "intended to be over 18 years old," anime porn laws are notoriously loose in Japan.

But at least for Roba, programming adult games is about depicting the type of content people are interested in seeing. What he creates is not necessarily an indication of what he's into but rather what his audience seeks out. His biggest challenge, and inevitably his biggest reward, comes from eliciting

a very human response from the virtual realities he creates: sexually arousing gamers using lines of code. "I am just a programmer," Roba said. "I'm not *iyarashi*—lewd—by nature. I have to constantly engage with people to find out what kind of things they want to see."

The members of Adult VR No Kai all have a joke about Roba. In the joke, Roba will be sitting at his desk, doing what he does well—programming characters in virtual reality. The year will be 20XX. Faced with a rapidly declining population, humans from the future send a cyborg assassin tasked with saving mankind. The cyborg creeps up



behind Roba, pulls out a weapon and eliminates him.

"It will be like *The Terminator*," said Kaicho. "The people of the future will send one to kill Roba, because he will be blamed for the fertility problem." Other members nod their heads in agreement.

Plenty of ink has been spilled on Japan's population woes; a recent survey by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research of people aged 18 to 34 found 70 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women unmarried—out of which 42 percent of single men and 44 percent of single women were virgins. In a country gripped by a declining fertility rate, could advances in a virtual, immersive pornography platform worsen Japan's social issues?

Roba doesn't think so. For him, the fertility issue won't worsen just because of VR porn—though he wouldn't mind that, if only he could have a hand in it.

"As a programmer," he said, "if I can get my games to the level that it affects the [fertility] rate, I would be happy." ☒

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# LONELY HEARTS

## Best friends for 2 hours

BY ANGELA QIAN

I met my friend K outside Tokyo National Museum on a weekday afternoon. It was sunny out, but windy. Ueno Park was tranquil, filled with strolling couples and tourists. I'd gotten lost coming from the subway, and I ran across the street to meet K, who was standing next to the stoplight dressed all in navy. "Hi!" she said, waving at me. I apologized for being late and calculated the time in my head. I'd lost about ¥600, because K costs ¥4,000 an hour.

Client Partners advertises itself as *josei sutaffu no benriya*, roughly "Female-only Handymen."

Their website lists several examples of what their staff can help with. Some are general—watering houseplants, babysitting, cleaning, setting up Internet—and some oddly specific: "You want to dye your white hair, but can't get all the hair in the back," for example, or "For a girl staying at home alone while her family is on a trip, and a cockroach comes out. She wants someone to chase the cockroach out, or to stay with her until morning," or, "A man in his 30s who wants to confess his love to someone at work, but doesn't want to create a bad atmosphere or trouble her. Wants a girl her age to convey his feelings to her."

In recent years there has been a surge of media awareness of Japanese services providing

what is perhaps best described as purchased intimacy. There are cuddle cafes where you can pay to lie next to a pretty girl, and *mimi kaki* salons where you can lie in a hostess's lap while she gently cleans out your ears. While the base model for such services is nothing new—host and hostess clubs have a long history in Japan—and it is easy to view these services in a priapic light, most coverage insists that there are clear boundaries and there is nothing sexual involved. Reportedly, these services cater to simple unmet needs of human connection among the increasingly isolated Japanese people. And so enters the rent-a-friend.

I reserved through the Client Partners website, specifying when I wanted to meet up and what I wanted to do. When I called the office to confirm my reservation, I was asked if I had any requests as to the type of person I wanted. Should she be young, should she speak English, should she like art? The base fee is ¥3,000, and the hourly rate varies depending on the activity. My rent-a-friend would call me once she was at our designated meeting place.

K is a photography student originally from southwest Honshu. She's what the Japanese call *haafu* (half-Japanese), and is tall, fair, and

light-haired. When we entered the museum, I paid for our tickets. Not sure on the policy, I hesitated at the counter until K said, "Together, please," to the vendor. It was the first reminder that this was not a normal friend date. I awkwardly waved off her apologetic "Thank you" and hurried into the first exhibit.

While we were examining the thousand-handed Buddhas and imported ceramics, K and I talked. She was a flexible talker: She had a steady, reassuring gravity offset by an easy, self-aware sort of dry humor. Next to my nervous, slightly rushed chatter she never seemed impatient, answering each of my questions seriously and asking me thoughtful questions of her own. Carefully attentive but never intrusive, she didn't stick to my elbow but lingered over exhibits she especially liked and took photos with a film camera she'd gotten recently for her birthday. She only took her phone out once, to show me some art on Instagram. I asked about her matching jewelry, including a chunky green bracelet and ring she'd made in a workshop. She mentioned a taste for eclectic fashion but kept it toned down, she said, for work.

She started working at Client Partners after quitting her last job at a studio in Tokyo. It's a large company, with enough workers that she doesn't recognize everyone. Her requests run a gamut—often she is called on for housework, though other outings have included, for example, watching three movies in a row with a client. She said the company receives so many requests she is sure to get at least one call a day asking if she can come in. The screening process to become a Client Partner is selective. One of the reasons K was hired is for her height, which makes cleaning jobs easier. But another reason is that she has a warm smile—she was told—which makes people feel at ease.



**“  
THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IS TO KNOW THAT WE CANNOT RULE OUT THESE TYPES OF PEOPLE... TO NOT BLAME THESE PEOPLE THEMSELVES. ANYONE CAN BECOME A SNEP.”**

Later we wandered into more personal ground. Walking onto the museum terrace, we looked out over the pond and talked about our families. She opened up about why she chose to go into photography, the internal anxieties she thinks plague those who choose artistic paths, and the difficulties and confusions of growing up half. I talked about the loose and floating life of an expat, who exists on the edge of several communities. At one point K asked me directly, "Are you lonely in Japan?"

The CEO of Client Partners, Maki Abe, has said that Japanese society changed after World War II. They no longer make connections easily and have grown increasingly closed off. Abe wants Client Partners to help remedy that. K told me there is some truth to the stereotype

that Japanese people put on a polite mask while hiding their true feelings. This is partly why, she thinks, the services of Client Partners are in demand.

Yuji Genda, a professor at the Institute of Social Science in the University of Tokyo who studies youth employment issues, coined the term "SNEP" (Solitary Non-Employed Person), a class of unemployed people who "are not married or engaged in study, who are normally completely alone, or who do not spend time with people other than their family." They are similar to *hikikomori*, the infamous Japanese term for shut-ins who avoid social contact for long periods at a time.

Twenty years ago, he said, those at risk of becoming SNEPs were often men, those who had only attained a junior high school diploma, or aging unemployed people whose acquaintances have started families. But since the 1990s, these trends are fading as more and more people are at risk of becoming SNEPs, regardless of gender, age, or education. He calls this "generalization of solitude."

The factors behind this are many and complex. Genda attributes some of the increase to 1998, around the time of the Asian financial crisis and the burst of the bubble economy. The Japanese lifetime employment system was disrupted; the unemployment rate jumped up, as did suicide rates. The generation of graduates from the early aughts is called the "Ice Age Generation." Even now in their thirties and forties, many were never able to find regular employment, and have no money to socialize.

Another pervasive factor contributing to both unemployment and social isolation, Genda said, is a perceived lack of communication skills. Though the economy is recovering and there are many jobs now available, the industrial





structure is changing from manufacturing to more service-oriented jobs. Communication skills are indispensable both for interviews and interactions within the workplace. "Many people feel very high pressure to have such communication skills," Genda said, but do not believe that they have the appropriate skills.

When asked what is causing the communication issues, Genda brought up a broad demographic problem: Japan's rapidly aging society. With the declining birth rate in Japan, parents often hold very close bonds with their children; as Japan's population continues to age, children often take care of their parents, a full time occupation that leaves little time for anything else. Moreover, the generation that flourished in the post-WWII boom were able to accrue high savings, and many families are able to support their adult children if they move back home or are unable to find a job. This creates a deep mutual dependency between parents and children. "If you ask the mother, 'Who is your best friend?', the mother often answers, 'My best friend is my daughter,'" Genda said. "And if you ask the daughter, 'Who is your best friend?'—'Of course, my mother!'"

But many of the parents of the postwar boom will soon pass away. Many SNEPs now use or will have to use national welfare to survive. Genda worries that this is unsustainable, particularly with Japan's large national financial deficit. And with their parents' deaths, the children will be completely alone.

When I told Professor Genda about Client Partners, he looked slightly surprised. He hadn't heard of the company before. To be effective in combating social isolation, he said, the employees should be professionally trained. Another concern is that SNEPs would not be able to afford the service. Genda's research finds that SNEPs spend most of their time sleeping and watching TV because it is free; the ¥4,000 hourly fee of a Client Partner would be too expensive. Indeed, K had also told me that many of her clients were people in their forties who worked full-time.

There have been many businesses and NPOs who have sought to address the problem of hikikomori and social isolation. At their worst, Genda said, some businesses have taken advantage of desperate parents and enforced Spartan measures on SNEP children to "strengthen" their "weak" minds. One incident several years ago involved parents sending their socially isolated adult children to work on a yacht. The captain was so violent one person died. Genda opposes such solutions. He spoke approvingly of an NPO that invited struggling adults onto a farm; by farming together, they naturally developed more communication skills with one another. The problem is that desperate families may be easily extorted and unable to distinguish good services from bad ones. Genda thinks that one solution may be for the government to issue a licensing system to those who can professionally help struggling adults.

After publishing articles on SNEPs, Genda received letters from many families who expressed relief that a problem they thought unique to their families was, in fact, common. The issues, he said, are all related: youth unemployment, the pressures of communication, and social isolation. And though terms like hikikomori and SNEP are unique to Japan, Genda believes they may be worldwide phenomena.

"The most important point is to know that we cannot rule out these types of people... to not blame these people themselves. It is a social problem," he told me. "Anyone can become a SNEP."

After we left the museum, K and I took purikura in a game center, and she put her hand on my back in one of the photos. We covered the pictures with hearts and stickers saying "best friends." Then we walked back to the station. K looked genuinely regretful. She said she got a shock of loneliness at the end of each Client Partners session.

For my part, it was dangerously easy to imagine us as real friends. I liked K a lot—her artistic sense, dry humor, easygoing personality, and throaty voice. I didn't have to impress her. I wasn't afraid of appearing desperate, pathetic, or insecure. In some ways I was able to be more honest with K than anyone I had met in Japan.

But outside a business transaction with cold, hard cash, we were in dangerous territory. Who knew what she—we—would be like out in the real world, with its ambiguous parameters, unspoken words, and emotional risks?

When we got to the station K and I huddled in a corner while she punched out the time on a calculator. Two hours of her company cost, in total, ¥11,880. Once again, she seemed genuinely apologetic. I paid in cash. I didn't get a receipt. ☒

## ADVERTORIAL

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By venturing along the ancient trails, following in the footsteps of the countless pilgrims before us, we can feel a connection between us and the forest, the mountains and villages we see, and the people we meet. There is ample opportunity for contemplation and reflection before reaching the final destination, a site of spiritual significance and veneration.

The Three Kumano Grand Shrines on the Kii Peninsula south of Osaka and the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in the south of Spain are two such sites. The Kumano Kodo (Old Road to Kumano) and the Way of St. James (Camino de Santiago) UNESCO pilgrimage routes lead to these holy settings.

These places and trails, one in the East and one in the West, are linked not only by a partnership agreement but also in the hearts of the people who have completed the specified routes and required distances for both. These are the Dual Pilgrims!

Dual Pilgrims have collected stamps along the trails and, upon registration and confirmation of their achievement, they proudly received their Dual Pilgrim certificate made of Washi, locally-made Japanese paper, and a limited-edition pin badge. In Japan, Dual Pilgrims are also given the honour to play the taiko drum at the prayer hall of the Kumano Hongu Taisha Grand Shrine.

Since the inauguration of the program in early 2015, over 300 people from around the world have become Dual Pilgrims. When will you become one of them?



More information at [www.tb-kumano.jp/en/world-heritage/dual-pilgrim](http://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/world-heritage/dual-pilgrim)



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# LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FURRY

## Pet celebrities and their influence

BY THERESE DETJE

Two women lean over a pram, cooing and clutching at each other. They squeal "kawaii!" a couple more times, and my friend exclaims, "Is that a cat in there?!"

We slow down and look inside, and sure enough we see the squashed, sour face of a Calico Scottish Fold.

In a stupor, I ask the woman if I could take a photo of her cat. She wore a pink satin bandana tied in a bow at the back of her neck. The chic black pram was embellished with pearls, pink bows, and a polka-dot lining. I couldn't resist posting this lavish cat in its stylish chariot on my Instagram.

That same evening, the cat comments on my picture saying it was nice to meet me. She even adds a kissy-cat-face emoji. I was a little starstruck, told everyone about it, and felt a weird emotional rush.

Although we dominate the food chain, there's no denying that humans are often at the mercy to animals. We're instinctively afraid of those that are stronger, faster, and more poisonously fanged than us. And the animals that pose no threat to our safety also have an influence over us.

Kittens and puppies can make even the most spiteful person smile. Photos and videos of animals can elicit physical reactions—from screeches of "It's sooo cute!" to hideous snorts of laughter when a cat fails to land a jump. We laugh because we are used to seeing cats as elegant creatures, and a hilarious contrast is created when they embarrass themselves.

Liking cute animals comes from our biological programming to like human babies. When we see something with large eyes and soft (fluffy) textures, our brains flood with feel-good chemicals.

We even seem to love ugly animals if they look cute. A chihuahua-dachshund with a ridiculous overbite named Tuna is adored by 1.8 million followers on Instagram (@tunameltsmyheart). Grumpy Cat, also with 1.8 million followers (@realgrumpycat), is loved worldwide for her permanent bitchface. Their imperfections are what make them lovable.

Tokyo has its very own international pet celebrity—a shiba inu named Marutaro. He has 2.5 million followers on Instagram (@marutaro), making him the most popular dog on the internet.

Marutaro has a shop in Nezu, Tokyo. The small store has admirers constantly coming in and out, quietly browsing the merchandise. It must always be busy, because there were two staff members at the counter.

The shop is cozy and the merchandise feels homemade: there are hundreds of printed photos and stickers of Marutaro, books and DVDs about him, life-sized cushions, and even a set of Marutaro fake nails. I asked if he was around while paying for a badge and a calendar, but the shop assistant apologized and offered me an authentic ink-stamped paw print autograph in condolence.

This got me thinking about profiting from pet celebrities. In Marutaro's shop, there were tote bags for sale where proceeds went to a Japanese pet disaster relief charity. But the rest of the profits go to Marutaro and his owner, through a Marutaro PR and marketing consultancy called Bloomax Inc. At first I felt this was unfair. But why? Some people just have it easier when it comes to making money.

And it's not as if these guys don't know what they're doing—they're clever with how they use social media. The people behind celebrity pet accounts have tactics, as I saw with my cat-in-the-pram Instagram post. The cat's owner tracked my



post down via my geotag. This diverted my attention to the cat's account, I followed it, and voila! Soon enough this cat may also be extremely famous.

The influence of pet celebrities is obviously big, and humans can manipulate it for themselves. Pet celebrities often turn into brand influencers, and are paid to endorse products or services in their posts. Brands will hunt them down directly, or the PR people at animal talent agencies will set up collaborations. It's just another crazy way to make money these days.

But the power of celebrity pets is not only used to make money; some also use their fame to raise awareness about issues such as animal welfare and pet farming.

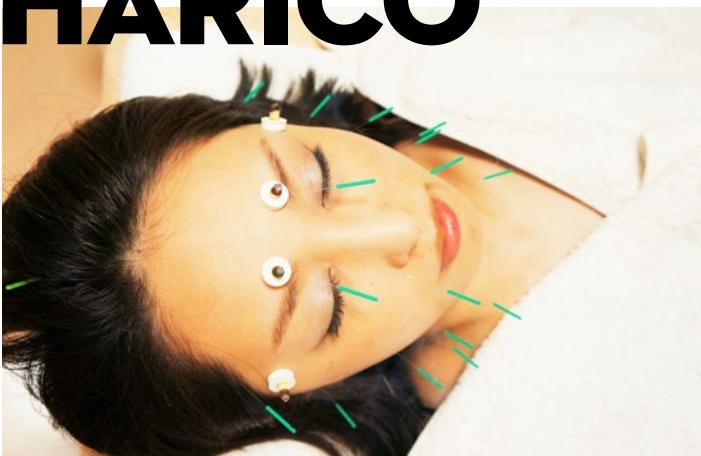
Now, everywhere I look I see the pet-elite being flaunted around Tokyo, the smaller and cuter the better. "On trend" breeds appear to be toy poodles, chihuahuas, shiba inus, bengals, and ragdoll cats. They're often on social media, and in public cruising in prams, parading in clothes, or at the very least, wearing clips in their hair.

Pets outnumber children under the age of 15 in Japan, and many people treat theirs like their own offspring. The temptation to accelerate a pet into stardom is very real, but it could further contribute to the problem of Japan's aging population and low birth rates.

Not only this, but we should remember that, although pet celebrities make us smile, they are managed by humans who know just how much a fluffy face with big eyes can melt us.



# HARICO



**A**cupuncture has been practiced for over 2000 years. One modern spin on this age-old practice promises not only health, but also beauty. It is used to reduce acne and induce glow. Hailed as the new Botox-that-isn't-Botox, cosmetic acupuncture has attracted celebrity devotees like Jennifer Aniston and Gwyneth Paltrow. Advocates tout the natural, noninvasive properties of cosmetic acupuncture, an alternative to the chemical treatments currently flooding the market for women's beauty.

You can experience cosmetic acupuncture in Tokyo itself at Harico, a private-service cosmetic acupuncture salon. With Harico's gentle and holistic beauty treatments, the body will use its natural healing power to lift up sagging, reduce fine lines, and eliminate swelling. The treatments can make your skin look healthier, younger, and achieve a more vital glow; it can refresh your skin and make your face look smaller.

Harico is conveniently located in Kinsicho in Tokyo, directly accessible

from Haneda and Narita Airports as well as from Tokyo, Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Yokohama. It is an individually-focused, small and intimate salon.

Harico promises a holistic beauty treatment that targets the mind, body, and soul. Acupuncture is a natural healing approach that does not use medicines or chemicals, but rather heals the body naturally. Rather than strictly Chinese acupuncture, Harico is based on a Japanese type of acupuncture.

Acupuncture improves stress-induced disorders, gives a feeling of mental and physical stability, and improves the functioning of internal organs. By harmonizing all these components through acupuncture, your skin condition will be improved. After one session at Harico you can see immediate results with lifting, slimming, and decreased dullness and sagging. The clinic can also help with menstrual cramps or troubles such as lack of sleep or irregular periods.

Menu options range from a small face treatment to whole-body maintenance which combines acupuncture and massage. Acupuncturist Masaki Yukako, qualified in massage, acupuncture, and moxibustion, will guide you through the process from counseling to treatment. Many customers are happy with the treatments and come back regularly. Try cosmetic acupuncture and become more beautiful today.

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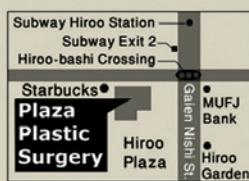
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# GO-KARTING TOKYO, LETSA GO!

**Steer clear of banana peels**

BY LIZ RHODUS

**C**rap. Yoshi's nose doesn't fit over my head. I have an explanation, I promise. Yoshi, Mario, King Boo, Sonic the Hedgehog, and all their fun friends, most of whom were born in Japan, have been by my side most of my life. Now, I'm donning a bright green Yoshi costume and about to race off in a go-kart through the streets of Tokyo. Does that explain it for you?

Until I did it, I didn't actually realize how nostalgic (and relaxing) real-life Mario Kart would be.

It's not like the nostalgia you get when visiting the cute little antiquated shops that are littered with figurines, pillows, and costumes. It's about stepping into an archaic, noise-ridden machine, and really living those characters. It was pretty exhilarating.

*People are definitely going to think this is dumb, I tell myself.*

My friends and husband have already picked out Toad, Luigi, and Pikachu costumes. As we're getting set up and briefed in our karts, I realize I



still don't know where we are going. *Do we have a map? What's the route? What if we get lost?*

Soon enough, we're all zooming away, and it's then I realize that we are in perfectly capable hands. We have a guide in the front and one in the back, and both are blocking and directing traffic for us as we enter the mad rush of Tokyo traffic.

As soon as I put my foot on the gas, the adrenaline kicks in—it's a juvenile rush, and nothing else matters. That pile of laundry on the table? It can wait. Homework, kids, cleaning, and anyone sending me messages from work? All those can wait.

Why? Because I'm now riding through Shibuya Crossing, one of the busiest intersections in the world, at night, in a go-kart, wearing a Yoshi costume.

We were superstars. It felt as if every single Japanese person was videotaping us, and some even came onto the road to take pictures with us. A permanent smile was plastered on my face; we were driving licensed go-karts through one

of the busiest cities on earth. Roppongi, Tokyo Tower, and the New Sanno—we drove by it all. Our bilingual guides took stellar photos, and never left our side.

MariKar is one of those experiences unique to Tokyo. You simply cannot experience it anywhere else. Eventually, MariKar wants to expand to Hawaii and the USA, but the experience won't be the same as blitzing past the icons of Tokyo. Take your GoPro, belongings, and driver's license (see website), and a serious amount of excitement.

Some would rather spend the ¥6,000 for 2-3 hours on a fancy dinner, massage, or onsen treatment. But MariKar is one of those experiences that doesn't come around very often, and it's worth it just for the jump back in time.

**MariKar, open from 10am-10pm. Email, call or text via LINE to make a reservation. Must have approved license to drive (see website). +81-3-6712-8275. shop@marikar.jp. www.marikar.com**





## KURASHINITY

**M**odern life has so many demands. Especially in a fast-paced city like Tokyo, it's increasingly stressful to juggle your professional life, home life, and social life. But you don't have to do it all alone.

This year Pasona, a major company in employment and HR solutions, launched Kurashinity, an affordable, efficient housekeeping service designed with the utmost consideration for the client. (The name is a Japanese-Tagalog neologism combining "kurashi," live, and "ngiti," smile.)

Though housekeepers are often a fixture in other Asian countries like Singapore and Hong Kong, they tend to form direct contracts with their employers and live with them full time. The employers must also train their housekeepers from scratch.

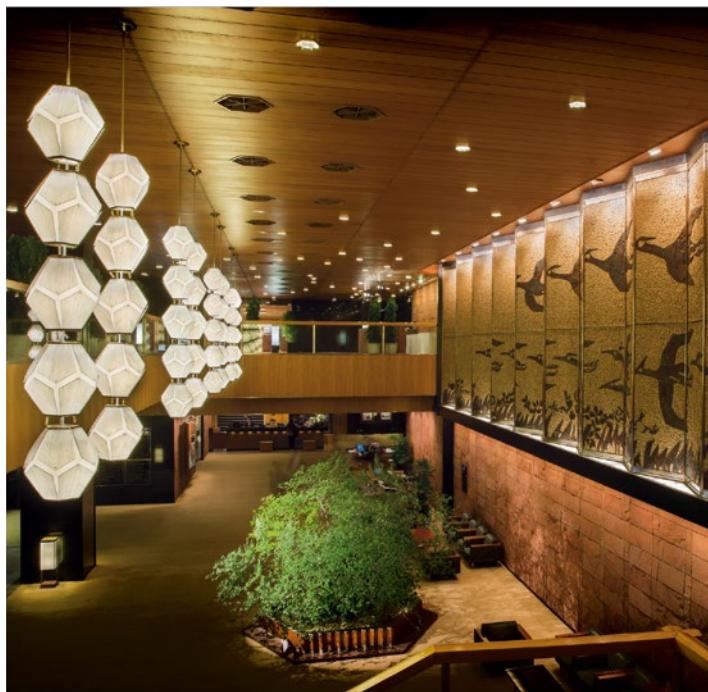
By contrast, the housekeepers are directly employed full time and closely managed by the organization itself. Rather than a live-in housekeeper, Kurashinity's housekeepers work by the hour. Testimonials consistently express surprise at how much and how thoroughly their apartments were cleaned in the short amount of time the housekeepers were in their homes.

There are many benefits of contracting with Kurashinity rather than forming direct contracts with a housekeeper. Kurashinity carefully screens and trains their staff so that clients can rest assured the housekeepers in their home will be well-educated and well-trained.

Service requests are handled directly through Pasona, so there will be no difficulties with training the housekeeper in a new task or of communicating with them. The reliability of Kurashinity's service also ensures that each commission will be completed in a fixed amount of time. With an English website and sales staff, Kurashinity is very easy to register with and can start service very quickly.

Moreover, in the one-in-a-million chance of trouble such as damages during a housekeeper's visit, Pasona will hold complete liability. One business professional, Lisa K., expressed worry about a stranger coming into her home. But once she heard of Kurashinity's damage insurance and security measures--house keys are kept in the office, and must be checked out and returned every time--she felt more assured.

With Kurashinity's service, the company does all the work for you. If you have a special request for the housekeeper, want to change the schedule, have concerns about the housekeeper, or have any request related to the service, just e-mail the company and they will act on your behalf so you don't have to lift a finger. Kurashinity's reliable and efficient service is sure to bring a smile to your face. **Tel: 03-6734-1131. E-mail: housekeeping@pasona.co.jp.** Register at [www.kurashinity.com/en](http://www.kurashinity.com/en).



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\*Tax and service charge not included.

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## ADVERTORIAL

# CRYOSAUNA



Boxer Tomomi Takano mid-session at Cryosauna

Leicester City achieved the impossible by winning the Premier League last season. In perhaps the greatest underdog story in sporting history, they beat odds of 5,000-to-1 to become champions.

But everyone knows that already.

What is less known, and perhaps the secret to Leicester's success, is the use of cryotherapy in their fitness and conditioning regimen.

Cryotherapy is an innovative treatment where the body is exposed to numbing temperatures. Typically, liquid nitrogen or refrigerated cold air is blasted in a special chamber that gets as cold as -190°C.

The below-freezing air is applied after strenuous workouts to relieve sore and inflamed muscles. This aids in the recovery process, resulting in fewer injuries. It is said to improve recovery times for athletes. Cryotherapy essentially works like an ice bath, though three minutes in a cryogenic chamber is the equivalent of 45 minutes in an ice bath.

Cryotherapy also has a host of beauty and health benefits. Often described as the "fountain of youth," it is said that cryotherapy has anti-aging qualities. The science behind it is this: When the skin makes contact with extreme cold, blood vessels constrict and blood drains from extremities to maintain body temperature. When you warm up again, blood rushes to the surface of the skin, making you glow.

Cryosauna in Nishi-Azabu (a 30-second walk from the train station) is the go-to place for cryotherapy in Japan. Their cabin can service up to ten people an hour, and blasts 1.5-3.5 liters of frozen air in one session ranging from -110 to -190°C.

Cryosauna's clientele includes an impressive list of top athletes from baseball, rugby, and mixed martial arts. This is because cryotherapy has become the standard for athletes looking to maximize their performance. Many of Cryosauna's clients are also regular sports enthusiasts. Cryotherapy has also been linked to weight loss. Tomomi Takano, a Japanese boxer and a client of Cryosauna, lost four kilograms in just five sessions when she was preparing for a fight.

This is why cryotherapy is favored by top athletes, as well as Hollywood celebrities. The treatment has many beneficial effects for beauty, health, and fitness—boosting metabolism, reducing signs of aging, relieving pain disorders, and more. Try it out for yourself by booking an appointment at Cryosauna today. Sessions start at ¥10,800, and there are discounts for purchasing multiple sessions.

For Leicester City, it appears that the use of cryotherapy paid off; they had the fewest injuries in the Premier League last season.

**4F Ramyuuzu Juban Bldg. 1-6-5 Azabu-juban. ☎ Azabu-juban. Tel: 03-6804-6828. [www.cryosauna.jp](http://www.cryosauna.jp). Reservation required.**



# MAKING THE GLOBAL LOCAL

## International Associations in Japan

BY JOAN BAILEY

A mix of Japanese and foreigners gather at some small tables near the window, all leaning toward the center talking intently. A giant papier-mâché globe stands in one corner of the sun-filled room and an entire wall behind the water cooler overflows with announcements in English, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Arabic, and French. They promote workshops and events on everything from legal aid to kabuki classes and learning to cook German food. A bookshelf holds a selection of disaster-ready food packs, and a small meeting room is full of volunteers talking, planning, and more often than not, smiling. Another room hosts children of varying ages playing games, studying, or talking with Japanese and foreign volunteer caregivers. This busy little spot brimming with smiles, laughter, and information is the Musashino International Association (MIA).

Part of the Tokyo International Communication Committee, MIA is one of twenty associations scattered throughout the Tokyo Metropolitan area that offer everything from Japanese classes, to disaster training, to concerts and international fairs, all aimed at creating a multicultural city.

"Our aim is to help people feel safe and comfortable in a diverse community. Many of

our volunteers have lived abroad at some point—Europe, the United States, Africa, and Cambodia, for example—and they know what it feels like to be a foreigner," says Kyoko Tamura, a coordinator with MIA.

According to figures released in March 2016 by the Justice Ministry, there are 2.2 million long-term and permanent foreign residents living in Japan with more than 400,000 in Tokyo.

For many of them, international associations are the first real bridge to Japanese culture, language, and daily life. Tamura believes it makes a tangible difference.

"When I tell people that I've also lived abroad, that I understand their culture, they quickly change and relax if I share my experience with them," she says.

International associations in Japan were established in 1988 in all 47 prefectures and their major cities as part of a government effort to improve diversity in Japan at a grassroots level. Funded by local city governments, the associations also come under the umbrella of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), a group whose work includes the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, Sister City initiatives, and international exchanges.



Services vary from association to association, but all have the mission to help integrate foreigners into their communities. Most offer language classes and events throughout the year, while others, like MIA, organize everything from disaster preparedness to cooking and legal aid workshops. Some offer programs that let university exchange students spend time in a Japanese home to share their food and experience daily life. Others offer tutoring sessions or short trips to places around the community to help people new to Japan integrate more easily.

The associations, though, aren't only for foreigners. Efforts to reach out to Japanese residents are also an important part of the grassroots efforts. Cooking classes, international festivals, and visits to local schools by foreign residents to share their culture, religion, and traditions bring people together.

"International associations build connections. Maybe some Japanese residents have never talked to foreign people or do not approach them, but they are still curious about a cooking class. Once they have that experience, they become more open and friendly. It starts a stronger relationship in the community," said Tamura. "That helps in emergencies and disasters, but it's even more important for everyday life for everyone."

### FINDING AN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

#### TOKYO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE (TICC)

A website listing all twenty international associations in Tokyo along with links to other useful resources.

[www.tokyo-icc.jp/english](http://www.tokyo-icc.jp/english)

#### YOKOHAMA ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGES (YOKE)

Established in 1981, YOKE offers a wide variety of language classes, events and services.

[www.yoke.or.jp/english](http://www.yoke.or.jp/english)

#### COUNCIL OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (CLAIR)

A government organization working with local communities, businesses and groups to facilitate international exchange and relationships.

[rlia.clair.or.jp/kyoukai/index.html](http://rlia.clair.or.jp/kyoukai/index.html)

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## NOVEMBER NEWS

More than 2,000 chrysanthemums of different varieties and colors are on display at the **Yushima Tenmangu Shrine Chrysanthemum Festival**. From November 1 to 23, the flower displays will include the unique addition of some cleverly-shaped arrangements into dolls. Don't miss this opportunity to take in one of Japan's great autumn traditions in a lovely setting in the heart of the city. [bit.ly/2emISV](http://bit.ly/2emISV)

Pass under the brilliant gold leaves of giant ginkgo trees planted at the beginning of the Showa Period in Takao. The **Hachioji Ginkgo Festival**, November 19-20, is a spectacular opportunity to watch crowds dressed in period costume pass through ancient checkpoints. [www.ichou-festa.org](http://www.ichou-festa.org)

Discover new innovations in technology, architecture, and more at the **Super Welfare Expo**. This annual event focuses on making communities more diverse and differently-abled friendly. Lectures and demonstrations

in two nearby parks are part of this awareness raising event in the stunning Hikarie Building just moments away from Shibuya Station. 11am-8pm on November 8-14. [www.peopledesign.or.jp/fukushi](http://www.peopledesign.or.jp/fukushi)

Come meet international neighbors at the **Musashino International Association (MIA) International Fair**. This international affair will be held 11am-5pm on November 13 over on Tokyo's west side. Nibble a tasty traditional treat from another part of the globe while taking in a variety of songs, dances, and traditional costumes from around the world. Children of all ages will find something fun to do, see, and learn. [www.mia.gr.jp](http://www.mia.gr.jp)

The **Nippori Farmer's Market** on November 19-20 is a little market that packs a big punch of seasonal treats, music, and crafts in one of the oldest parts of the city. Meet growers from Aizu Wakamatsu and nibble the regional treats they bring along each month fresh from their fields. Or try some of the best steamed manju (red bean stuffed buns) this side of the Emperor's Palace. [www.nipporiyumedonya.com](http://www.nipporiyumedonya.com)

An **Earthquake Preparedness Workshop** will be held on November 29. This two-and-a-half-hour

workshop helps participants learn what to do not only when an earthquake hits, but how to prepare. Topics include preparing an emergency kit, earthquake proofing your home, earthquake literacy, and how to find and use evacuation shelters and areas in your neighborhood. [www.wanavi.org](http://www.wanavi.org)

Professed to be one of the largest farmers markets in town, the **Market of the Sun** is where an excellent selection of seasonal fruit and veggies can be found year round. The theme for November is nabe (hot pot), which promises excellent recipes along with the choicest of produce. A tidy selection of food carts and kid-friendly activities make this market worth a visit. 10am-4pm on November 12 and 13. [www.facebook.com/taiyounomarche](http://www.facebook.com/taiyounomarche)

Set up in trendy Bashamichi, the **Yokohama Kitakata Marche** brims with baked goods, tasty jams, seasonal fruit and vegetables, food trucks galore, and some nifty crafts. Run by the same folks who brought the Market of the Sun to life, the event includes some of the same vendors, but there are plenty of fresh faces, too. Don't miss the chance to talk with some of Kanagawa's best growers and producers! 10am-4pm, November 19-20. [bit.ly/2ds8gbQ](http://bit.ly/2ds8gbQ)

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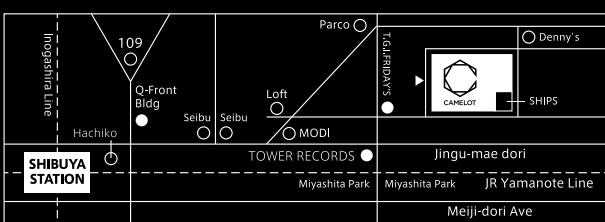
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## I MET DAVID BECKHAM

BY MEL



## HOROSCOPE

BY CATHRYN MOE

♥ Love ♠ Money ♣ Luck

### ARIES

Mar 21-Apr 20 ♥♥♥ ¥ ♣♣♣

 Do you have space to escape if you're getting more attention than you need? November is full of nostalgia. It opens the door to a type of independence that has been a long time coming. Never mind the fog, clouds, or rain; you're free to feel great in any kind of weather. Aries is not one to hold back. As the hottest of the fire signs, express yourself and show others how it's done!

### TAURUS

Apr 21-May 21 ♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣

 In sunshine or mist, your inner climate begs for attention. Autumn's changing colors have a way of bringing back memories from the past. For Taurus it's a bonus – you finally break free. November has a focus around relationships – whether you're in one or not. If your schedule has you all jammed up, let someone else in. An infusion of light in the gray – and a hot chocolate to make your day!

### GEMINI

May 22-Jun 21 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣♣

 Gloomy weather won't undo a Gemini's moods. You lift others' spirits. But what do you do when others can't be there for you? Flying off to another location has a tendency to cheer you up. So does the thought of soaring above the down drafts of the day. Even if you have no plans to travel in November, go ahead and check what the world has to offer. Explore.

### CANCER

Jun 22-Jul 23 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣

 While you're jumping through changes at work, love may also take center stage. Stability is important to Cancers. It's a big risk to take, so double check your agenda, hopes, and dreams. Inspiration and a possible bonus in your career helps you choose what's ultimately best for you. Venus hovers, as do Saturn, Mercury, and Juno in November. Look at your long-range forecasts.

### LEO

Jul 24-Aug 23 ♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣

 November has a tendency to cool things down. This is true in the northern hemisphere when it comes to the seasons. But it can just as easily heat things up with love and romance, wherever you may be. The month starts out with a hint of secrecy, which clears and brightens as each week arrives. Leos are naturally encouraging to others. It's just one of your stellar zodiac strengths.

### VIRGO

Aug 24-Sep 23 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣

 You've got this. Have you been dealing with an imbalance of power nearby? Now you can nurture your strengths. As a Virgo, you can't help but want to help others. In November, the focus is on you. Selfless as you are, you sometimes have to put yourself first! Virgo's starry alignment pulls you to the top. Just keep working on the foundation that nourishes you most.

### LIBRA

Sep 24-Oct 23 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣

 November can be tough on a Libran. Are nature's colors changing with hints of winter nearby? You're sociable enough to infuse others with your charm. Whatever gusts and winds may bring, you're always a breath of fresh air. Use your Venus-ruled sign to treat yourself and those you care for. The cool autumn air offers butterfly-winged skies to hold clear night stars.

### SCORPIO

Oct 24-Nov 22 ♥♥♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣♣

 The Sun is well into your sign in November. During the fourth week, it enters your financial sector. No pressure! While others find their way through, you have a halo around your income. Not every Scorpio holds their breath, but you may prefer to keep some safe and hidden for a rainy day. Love? Yes. Romance? Not so much, but somehow you won't mind.

### SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23-Dec 22 ♥♥ ¥¥¥¥ ♣♣♣

 Things have been such a challenge for Sagittarians! When you have a moment free, you may wonder what you forgot. You can't do everything at once – no one can. The transit of Saturn in your sign continues throughout November. It's more of a check-up to see yourself in the grand scheme of things, rather than a pass/fail class you've stumbled into. Energies pick up later this month.

### CAPRICORN

Dec 23-Jan 20 ♥♥ ¥¥ ♣♣♣

 The Moon is in Capricorn the beginning of November. It sets the pace. Your projects are ever-present, but they define you. What you like best is the shared aspect of making something last. You're smart enough to know that change is a constant, but your efforts are the difference between a thought, a feeling, and a viable step towards results. Which are on their way in!

### AQUARIUS

Jan 21-Feb 19 ♥♥ ¥¥¥ ♣♣

 November is full of dips and peaks. Your priorities are going through an overhaul. In the back of your mind, you may be casting about for the perfect 'home' scenario. Or you're happy where you are, but the matrix keeps throwing holograms into your scene. Mars reaches your sign during the second week. This is a relief, as the energy you need comes full blast to support your efforts.

### PISCES

Feb 20-Mar 20 ♥♥ ¥¥¥¥ ♣♣♣

 When it comes to coaching others, you have an attractive other-worldly quality. This is particularly helpful if you are involved with the arts. November is a great month to get outside and feel revved up by what's happening around you. In connecting with nature, whether it's a walk in the park, a swim, or a run with friends, you'll happily blend into the bigger picture.

# CTRL-SHIFT-ESC

**Shortcut escapes around Tokyo**

**E**ven the largest city in the world offers areas of tranquility. We asked around for the places in Tokyo that help you find calm and forget the real world. The answers were diverse and unique, and reminded us that even the smallest kind of escape can help us refocus when reality gets too much. Here they are.

## KAREN

I like walking around Daikanyama to look at all the nice clothes and wish I could wear them.

## ELISA

Cha-bo in Tamachi. This bar is owned by an experienced couple who makes great homey food that feels like coming back home. Also it's a very cozy, quiet, and small bar with only 6 seats!

## SUSANNE

Todoroki Valley is a very peaceful place. The valley is actually a small gorge, with temples, koi ponds and little cherry tree areas dotted around. It's very pretty in all the different seasons.

I also love Okamoto Minkaen, a little park in Setagaya-ku where they have lovingly restored old farmhouses from the Edo period. I sat on the wooden veranda of the old house, enjoying the autumn sun.



## THOMAS

Sento (Japanese communal bath houses) are very relaxing.

## NAHUEL

Kamakura is really nice and not too far from Tokyo. The famous giant buddha statue is there, but my favorite is the nearby Enoshima island; it has great seafood and a very festive vibe.

## STEPHEN

The Ikegami Honmon-ji temple and the area around it. It's quiet and relaxing; there's lots of space to walk and there are good cafes.

## CARL

Mount Takao. It's not far from the main part of Tokyo, and there is a very nice view amidst the beautiful nature. Both Okutama and Ome stations have rental bikes to go around the area, and there are many "best-kept secret" type restaurants.



Illustrations by ChristRochin

## CHRIS

There's a pet shop in Ebisu that's like heaven.

## ERIN

I like the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Chuo Library in Hiroo. It's in Arisugawa Park.

## FERNANDO

I really like to walk around Odaiba. I love Odaiba. It has a really good atmosphere. There's the waterfront and nature, and behind you a lot of shopping malls.



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